

/18 cont./

428 (eits' bshakhu /see foreign text/). After the settlement for seniority and minority, all that is left is divided equally among the brothers; in addition, the youngest receives the father's house, yard, etc. Sisters receive less than brothers.

593 Kind and affable in public, the Abkhaz at home is rather stern, imperious, and so taciturn that it is as if he were too lazy, or at any rate not sufficiently inclined, to spare a single kind or friendly word for the members of his household. The Abkhaz woman enjoys a great deal of freedom. She is no less busy than the man; for instance, she carries the maize to the mill herself, and in some places she grinds it herself with a hand mill. In summer, she works, hoe in hand, side by side with the man in the maize-field. The wives of the members of the higher classes [565] toil no less than their husbands, but, on the other hand, they enjoy more freedom and are held more in esteem than is the case otherwise.

562 A woman is treated with respect and esteem by young and old. Women attend community meetings, mourning rites, [535] funeral banquets; they are present at the gatherings of the men and dance with them. There have been instances of women [579] being the leaders of the abragi in night raids. Women perform religious rites and ceremonies. But with all this, the Abkhaz woman is expected to be innocent and modest, and to speak to older men politely and courteously.

562 If her husband divorces her without sufficient reason, the 586 Abkhaz woman has the right to appear at the village meeting and [692] defend herself. And she skillfully uses this right: she goes to the meeting with as much determination as her husband, and defends herself with great eloquence. While the husband can divorce his wife on various grounds, she can do the same to her husband if he has done her any wrong.

[ 772 cont. ]

<sup>C</sup>  
533 Art and play. The old traditions of the past and of the deeds of the Cherkess were preserved by the wandering minstrels (gegwako); they used to sing of them at feasts and festivals, whereas nowadays they present hardly anything but songs of congratulation and praise and comic songs. As far as is known, the folk literature of the Abkhaz is rich in religious and festive songs and prayer formulas, and probably also in heroic and other



Fig. 452. Guitar with two strings, Abkhaz (1/7 natural size)  
(Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg).

<sup>A</sup>  
534 songs. As accompaniment to the singing, a two or three-stringed guitar is used (Abkhaz, ap'khirtsa, see Fig. 452) or the Mingrel lute (at'angur), the handle of which is sometimes carved or shaped in the form of a head. In addition, the

<sup>C</sup>  
534 Cherkess still use long flutes (tšebizga) of reed or metal, with three finger-holes, and triangular harps (pšine-duk-okyo), which also occur among the Swan; they are 20 to 70 centimeters wide and have 40-centimeter-long hair strings attached to the resonator and to pegs above.

● <sup>A</sup>  
535 The favorite dance among the Abkhaz is the "shoulder-dance," in which the young people hold each other by the hand, [ 773 ] turn around as they sing, and from time to time leap in the air. Among the Cherkess there were girls' dances (denyola), in which they hopped in one place, round dances of men and girls (uk) combined with singing, and wild war-dances (kofa) performed by a single fully-armed man.

<sup>A</sup>  
536 The principal amusements of the men are contests of strength, stone-casting, ball-throwing, and the like. The Abkhaz used to fight duels with the sword, usually while sitting

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1. *Adzrga-khwasha*

Either during the night before *baioba*, or, according to some members of the Commission, on the Wednesday evening of Passion-week, is observed the rite of binding legs with wool threads. Having supped early, the family retires to bed, each individual thrusting out his or her right leg from under the blanket. The eldest woman in the family stands on a stool in the middle of the room, and spins thread from wool. She does her work in silence. Having spun the required quantity, she quietly approaches the beds, and binds with this thread the right leg of each of their occupants, murmuring: "May God grant thee to see such days for a hundred years!" *Adzrga* (more correctly, *adzrga*) denotes a thick thread; *a-khwasha*—Friday, so that this rite was in former days, probably, observed on Fridays. The threads were afterwards burnt on the fire under the small cauldron in which was boiled the meat of the sacrificial animal, on Easter Day. [796] [782]

2. *K'wab-gharghar\**

As soon as the binding ceremony was finished, the woman seized a copper cauldron, or a copper basin, and struck it like a gong, shouting at the top of her voice: "We have beaten! We have beaten!" The whole family then ran out into the garden, shouting *shwakh'wat'weyt*! "We have beaten you (outstripped)!" The "beaten" neighbours, annoyed to find themselves "beaten", immediately fell upon them, and a mock battle ensued. The battle was fought, of course, entirely as a joke, and with great merriment. In ancient times, a whole village often went to "battle" against another, beating copper cauldrons and basins. The "battle" was followed by dances and fun-making continuing till the dawn. *A-k'wab* denotes cauldron of copper, *gharghar*, knock, rap, clatter of a copper cauldron or basin. [415] [535]

3. *Aqa'wara*

This Abkhasian term denotes the following superstition: an Abkhas considers it a great misfortune if he hears the warbling or chirping of a swallow or the call of a cuckoo, before he has had his breakfast (or has at any rate partaken of salt); the bird will have "beaten" him, and this he regards as a great misfortune. In order to avoid this he eats salt, or something salt-flavoured immediately on rising from bed, which means that he has won the "contest".<sup>1</sup> [825]

\* The labial semi-vowel "w" in "A'w", "A'w", as also in "A'w", "A'w", etc., met with in this article, labializes the preceding consonant sound, the combination "A'w", "A'w", etc., representing labialized varieties of "A'", "A'", etc. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.] 104

<sup>1</sup> Georgians also have such a superstition. 171